

Facilitating Skill-building during Project Planning

Skill-building can be a large focus of project planning for participants. No matter what sort of project participants choose, they have the opportunity to explore how to organize people and resources to accomplish a goal. At various times, participants may be faced with needing to do something they've never done before, such as writing a donation letter or creating a flyer.

As much as possible, participants should be accomplishing these tasks themselves: that is, they should write the final donation letter or design the flyer. Facilitators can help guide participants by helping them search for resources and possibly acting as resources themselves.

Guiding participants through this process is not always the same as teaching them the skills. It's important to note that facilitators do not necessarily need to know the specific skill themselves in order to facilitate a learning process.

Facilitating a Learning Process

- ⇒ **Ask questions.** Start off with questions such as: Where can we find information on how to do this? Who else would you ask besides me? Who else might know how to do this?
- ⇒ **Explore the answers.** Common answers could include: searching the Internet, going to the library, asking other facilitators or professionals. Participants may be comfortable exploring those possibilities on their own or may need continued guidance. If participants need more guidance, it could be helpful to go back to asking questions. For instance, if they want to search the Internet for a donation letter template, ask them where they might start looking on the Internet.
- ⇒ **Provide resources.** In some cases, outside resources may not be available. Facilitators can then provide them (such as donation letter templates) and explain how they found these resources.
- ⇒ **Practice with facilitators.** The skill could be producing something (such as a donation letter) or doing something (such as asking for a donation). In both cases, the skill should be practiced with facilitators' guidance before going outside of the group. For instance, if it is a donation letter the facilitator can look over the participant's draft and help edit it so the final product is better. If it is an action such as asking for a donation in person, participants can practice with facilitators.
- ⇒ **Use the skill as needed for the service project.** Once participants are comfortable with their new skill they can fulfill the function needed for the service project.
- ⇒ **Check-in to see if participants are comfortable.** After participants have utilized their new skill, check-in with them to see if they feel comfortable using it, if there's anything else they'd like to learn, or what they may have learned from utilizing the skill.

Using a full process such as this can help participants not only learn the new skills they need, but also help build intangible skills such as problem-solving. By the end of the service project, participants may have the skills to teach themselves new skills with little facilitator guidance.